



News Release

Office of the Louisiana State Fire Marshal
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FIRE SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The Christmas holiday symbols that help make the season bright also help to increase the chance of unwanted fire. The State Fire Marshal's Office offers the following recommendations in hopes of making the holiday season fire safe.

REGARDING OUTDOOR HOLIDAY SAFETY, WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING:

- Use a dry wooden ladder when hanging holiday lights to reduce the chance of electrical shock, and stay clear of overhead electrical wires.
- Use insulated staples that are hammered-in rather than staple guns, again to reduce the chance of electrical shock.
- Water proof all electrical connections and keep them elevated so rain water will not drain into the connection and possibly cause a shock or a short circuit.
- Avoid standing in water while handling electrical wiring or when using electrical power tools.
- Shut off electrical power when replacing bulbs and keep the electricity off while putting up outdoor holiday lighting.
- Always use an extension cord that has a three (3) pronged plug (which is an extension cord with a ground wire) that is approved by Underwriters Laboratory (UL) for outdoor use.
- NEVER allow the bulbs to touch combustible material, such as plastics, leaves, grass, or pine needles.

REGARDING INDOOR HOLIDAY SAFETY, THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE SUGGESTS THE FOLLOWING:

- Avoid buying Christmas trees with shedding needles as it is a sign that the tree is dry and a greater fire risk.
- Cut two (2) inches from the base of the tree trunk so it can better absorb water.

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HOLIDAY FIRE SAFETY

- Keep the tree outdoors with the trunk placed in a large bucket of water for a few days before bringing it indoors to insure the tree has absorbed enough moisture to stay fresher, thus making it less of a fire hazard.
- Install the tree away from all heat sources, open flames, and exits.
- Replace any light string with frayed or broken wires, loose connection, or broken or cracked sockets.
- Do NOT overload extension cords, adapters, or outlets. Only one length of extension cord or adapter should be used per outlet.
- Do NOT place electrical cords under rugs or carpet as walking traffic can weaken the insulation and increase the risk of fire or electrical shock.
- Do NOT place electrical cords where they would pose a tripping hazard.
- Do NOT hang electrical lights from a metallic tree because damaged insulation could electrically charge the tree and cause a shock or fire. Instead, use colored spot lights either above or beside the tree, but never on the tree.
- ALWAYS unplug the tree lights whenever you leave the house or go to bed.
- Be sure artificial trees are fire-retardant and have a UL label to verify it.
- Be sure all decorative lighting is UL labeled.
- NEVER burn gift wrapping in fireplaces because it can ignite suddenly and cause a flash fire. Also, since gift wrapping burns very hot, which causes large flames, it can ignite creosote deposits in the chimney and cause a fire in the chimney.
- NEVER burn Christmas trees in fireplaces because the flames can flare out of control and send sparks flying into the room.

Finally, the State Fire Marshal's Office advises all state citizens that they should have a working smoke detector on each level of their home installed according to manufacturer's recommendations. Normally, we buy only one detector and place it in the hall leading to the bedrooms. We need to put one in each bedroom as well. This will alert parents of young children who may be playing with matches in their rooms. Detectors should be tested every month and the battery changed every six (6) months. Smoke detectors and fire extinguishers make great holiday gifts that could save a loved one's life. Hopefully, these holiday fire safety tips will insure everyone having a safe and joyful Christmas season.

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